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Critique Summary:

When looking at how to evaluate software I usually look for a few things. First off, I look at the price. Price to me is a combination of the cost plus how annoying the ads on the website are. If a website has a lot of ads that are constantly getting in the way then I usually consider this as part of the price. I also consider any cookies or other ways for them to make money as part of the price as well but I usually only research this if it seems like this website is asking for more information than I want to give them. Privacy is how much information can be seen by other people in combination with how much control I have over published information. If a website gives me full control over the content I wish others to see then I consider it very private. Ease of use is how easy it is to use the program in question. Because I tend to be better with computers then most people this category with me focuses on how long it takes me to figure out how to do something. The final category, usefulness, focuses on if I would use this program in my classroom or some other part of my life. Sense I am a secondary Social Studies teacher I will be looking at this category from this perspective. If it is something I would use in my classroom than it is considered useful. The different degrees of usefulness depends on how often I might use it in combination with how many other tools I have to use in order for it to get its full effect. Overall, I hope to use all of these factors to present an effective critique of the various online tools and how useful they will be for a teacher.

# The Technology Toolbox

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| Price | 5 4 3 2 1 | Comments |
| Privacy | 5 4 3 2 1 | Comments |
| Ease of Use | 5 4 3 2 1 | Comments |
| Usefulness | 5 4 3 2 1 | Comments |

Aggregator: Google Reader

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Price | 5 4 3 2 1 | Google Reader is free |
| Privacy | 5 4 3 2 1 | Google Reader can be controlled so that only you can view the information and share what you want to share. |
| Ease of Use | 5 4 3 2 1 | Google Reader is relatively easy to use because of a simple to understand interface. |
| Usefulness | 5 4 3 2 1 | I might start using a website like this when I start tracking multiple RSS feeds on a regular basis but for now it’s just not something I need. |

Search Sites: Web Crawler

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| Price | 5 4 3 2 1 | The website Is free but it has quite a few ads that are a little more annoying then Google. |
| Privacy | 5 4 3 2 1 | It saves your last searches for anyone to see on your computer if you know how to look for them. |
| Ease of Use | 5 4 3 2 1 | It doesn’t really seem as friendly as other search sites and has a lot of unexplained clutter. |
| Usefulness | 5 4 3 2 1 | The tag system saves this website and distinguishes itself from Google. I would only use it when I want to find similar searches that Google couldn’t give me. |

WebStart: Protopage

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Price | 5 4 3 2 1 | This website is free to use. With pretty much 0 ads |
| Privacy | 5 4 3 2 1 | Anyone can access your Protopage for information but only you can Edit it. Also, people could only really find it if you gave them the URL. |
| Ease of Use | 5 4 3 2 1 | Some of the things this website can do are not easy to find out. Also, the websites needs a widget search of some sort beyond its tag system. |
| Usefulness | 5 4 3 2 1 | Aside from a few things it can’t do I find this website to be really useful. |

Weblogs: Blogger

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| Price | 5 4 3 2 1 | Blogger is a free service and it has very few ads. |
| Privacy | 5 4 3 2 1 | Blogger can change permissions so that only people you want to see it can. |
| Ease of Use | 5 4 3 2 1 | Blogger is relatively easy to use and I never had a problem finding out how to do something I wanted to do. |
| Usefulness | 5 4 3 2 1 | Blogger is a quick and easy way to keep your students up to date on classroom happenings. |

WikiSpaces: Wikispace

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Price | 5 4 3 2 1 | Free for teachers! |
| Privacy | 5 4 3 2 1 | Permissions can be edited and invites can be sent to people who want to see it. |
| Ease of Use | 5 4 3 2 1 | Easy to get into and work with. |
| Usefulness | 5 4 3 2 1 | In combination with blogger I have all I need for classroom communication. |

Web Based Word Processing: Google Docs

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| Price | 5 4 3 2 1 | Free |
| Privacy | 5 4 3 2 1 | Only those who you want to work with can edit your document. |
| Ease of Use | 5 4 3 2 1 | Some of the features and sharing take some time to fully maximize. |
| Usefulness | 5 4 3 2 1 | For collaborative projects this is a wonderful idea. It can prevent the “But I XXXXX had it and I couldn’t make any changes.” |

Web-based spreadsheets and Databases: Google Docs

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Price | 5 4 3 2 1 | Free |
| Privacy | 5 4 3 2 1 | Only people who you want to see/edit it can. |
| Ease of Use | 5 4 3 2 1 | It’s not quite Excel so it takes some time figuring out its differences but for the most part it’s easy to understand. |
| Usefulness | 5 4 3 2 1 | Same as the previous Google doc’s. It’s a great way to make sure students collaborate and can avoid the “I don’t have it” routine. |

Creative Writing: Fanfiction.net

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| Price | 5 4 3 2 1 | Free but the ads were annoying. |
| Privacy | 5 4 3 2 1 | You can publish what you want to publish but it seems to track you through a cookie. |
| Ease of Use | 5 4 3 2 1 | No real help file or explanation. Took some time to figure out what it was. |
| Usefulness | 5 4 3 2 1 | Maybe for an English or creative writing class this might be useful but for Social Studies or Science I just wouldn’t use it. |

Assessment tools: Rubistar

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| Price | 5 4 3 2 1 | Free |
| Privacy | 5 4 3 2 1 | You can choose to publish rubrics or not. |
| Ease of Use | 5 4 3 2 1 | I forgot my password from when I was using it at Mead. For some reason it wants a lot of information. Other than that it’s easy to use. |
| Usefulness | 5 4 3 2 1 | Great at creating rubrics and I will definitely use this in the future. |

Podcasting: Audacity

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| Price | 5 4 3 2 1 | Free |
| Privacy | 5 4 3 2 1 | You can upload what you want to upload and thankfully delete your mistakes. |
| Ease of Use | 5 4 3 2 1 | Compared to some software I have used in the past this is really easy to use and get into. |
| Usefulness | 5 4 3 2 1 | I will use this program all the time. I would love to use it to give voice messages and information for my students. |

Screen casting: CamStudio

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Price | 5 4 3 2 1 | Free |
| Privacy | 5 4 3 2 1 | You can upload only what you want to. |
| Ease of Use | 5 4 3 2 1 | Easy to use but it took some time to figure out how to convert to MP3. |
| Usefulness | 5 4 3 2 1 | Poor quality when uploaded to YouTube. Until I find a way to fix this (if possible) I will not use this program. |